

National Fire Plan

Overview In August 2000, the President directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to develop a response to severe wildland fires, reduce fire impacts on rural communities, and assure sufficient firefighting capacity in the future. The report is officially entitled, *Managing the Impacts of Wildfire on Communities and the Environment: A Report to the President In Response to the Wildfires of 2000*, or the National Fire Plan (NFP) for short. Congress in turn mandated implementation of the NFP through its appropriation actions and written direction.

The NFP is founded on cooperation and collaboration with other Federal Agencies, States, counties, local government, Tribal government, contractors and other service providers. This cooperation has continued in fiscal year 2001 with the identification of communities in areas at risk of wildland fire, selection of hazard fuels treatment projects, and, through development of a comprehensive 10-year strategy for the National Fire Plan, to restore health to fire-adapted ecosystems. It is crucial to note current conditions have developed over many decades and cannot be reversed in a single year. Continued emphasis will be necessary over the long term to significantly reduce the risk to communities.

The Administration continues to stress the importance of this work, as evidenced by the President's budget proposal for fiscal year 2002. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture also reaffirm the importance of interagency efforts and partnerships that will reduce damage caused by wildland fires, restore and maintain ecosystem health, and deliver cost-effective programs to the public.

The President's budget for fiscal year 2002 integrates program components funded with emergency funds in fiscal year 2001 into the programs funded with regular appropriations. As such, the two Departments provide detail for the 2002 program in the respective accounts of their budget justifications. This section provides a summary of the program and - by highlighting some of the accomplishments in FY 2001 and plans for FY 2002 - displays how and where the Departments have and will continue to work together.

Key Points. The National Fire Plan is organized into the following major areas:

Firefighting – Assure sufficient preparedness and firefighting capacity for coming fire seasons. Wildland fire preparedness provides the Departments with the capability to prevent, detect, and take prompt, effective initial attack suppression action on wildland fires. This includes fire facilities. Funds will be used for the Departments to maintain an adequate level of firefighting effectiveness and performance capability.

Rehabilitation and Restoration - Restore landscapes and protect communities from post-fire damage. This covers both short and long-term efforts to improve lands unlikely to recover naturally from wildland fire damage, or to repair or replace minor facilities damaged by fire. The goal is to closely match historical or pre-fire ecosystem structure, function, diversity, and dynamics. Biological rehabilitation emphasizes planting native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees. These projects require planning, design, and contracting, may take several years to fully

implement. Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness of treatments may occur for up to three years following control of the fire.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction – Invest in projects to reduce fire risk, including fuels reduction in high-risk areas, primarily on Federal lands. Fuels management work will be targeted to high priority areas, especially wildland-urban interface areas. Fuels management includes fuels reduction, hazard mitigation, and ecosystem restoration. The Departments also plan to work with States and local communities in order to implement a collaborative program across agency boundaries.

Forest Health Management - This program focuses on management and control of native and non-native forest insects, diseases, and plants and the evaluation of forest/tree health after fires; it is included in the hazardous fuels management key point. Focus is on treatment of invasive species, suppression of bark beetles that increase as a result of trees weakened by fires, and technical assistance for the management and control of invasive species. USDA Forest Service provides support to states and other federal lands, including Department of Interior (DOI).

Rural and Community Assistance – Work directly with communities to assure adequate planning and action that increases protection of people and property.

Rural and Volunteer Fire Assistance - The USDA Forest Service (FS) program provides funds, through the States, to volunteer fire departments, to improve communication capabilities; provides critical wildland fire management training; and, to purchase protective fire clothing and firefighting equipment. DOI's program has similar goals and is implemented through local cooperative agreements.

State Fire Assistance - A FS program providing technical and financial assistance to the states to enhance a strong readiness capability at the state and local level. Also supports fire hazard mitigation projects in the wildland urban interface. Helps communities implement community based projects, like FIREWISE practices, to reduce fire risk and increase community sustainability. Support is also included for an expanded national public service fire prevention program.

Economic Action Programs - A FS program providing funds to work with local communities to identify, develop and expand economic opportunities related to historically underutilized species, and wood removed through hazardous fuel reduction treatments. Information, demonstrations, application development and training will be made available to participating communities. Support is also provided for community-led planning and prevention to reduce fire risk.

Community and Private Land Fire Assistance - A Forest Service program providing funds to support replacement of facilities destroyed by fire, in particular fences. In addition, high priority hazard mitigation projects will be implemented by States, in areas of the country most affected by wildfire. A complementary effort will fund a series of pilot projects promoting biomass utilization for energy production.

Accountability - Continue to provide current, accessible information on the status of how the Departments are meeting the goals of, and spending funds appropriated for, the National Fire Plan.

Research and Development - This program plays a key role in all areas of the fire plan. It includes Joint Fire Science, sponsored by both Departments, as well as additional work done by the FS. In concert with the key points, the latter has four primary themes: (1) Enhancing firefighting capacity and preparedness, including predictive models for fire weather, behavior and smoke dispersion; (2) Restoring landscapes and rebuilding communities; (3) Reducing hazardous fuels and fire risk; and (4) Working with communities.

FY 2001 Accomplishments

Collaborative Planning with States and Other Partners

- Completed a preliminary list of communities at risk in conjunction with States and Tribes to ensure we increase the focus of our future efforts on reducing fire risk in the areas adjacent to these communities.
- Developed a framework and draft of the national ten-year comprehensive strategy with the States as full partners in the planning, decision-making and implementation of the National Fire Plan.

Firefighting

- Continued the national recruitment effort to hire 4,462 firefighters (FS - 2,792 and DOI - 1,670) additional firefighters and other personnel to support the National Fire Plan. This included twenty (FS-12 and DOI-8) new hotshot crews for a national total of 91 crews.
- Initiated work on fire facilities and airtanker bases in all regions of the country. Project specific information is included in each Department's budget justification.
- Invested in applied research to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and safety of the national firefighting effort.

Rehabilitation and Restoration

- **Emergency Stabilization:** Burned area emergency rehabilitation (BAER) teams implemented stabilization projects on 2.9 million burned acres (FS - 85 large fires and 1.5 million acres; DOI 1.4 million acres). For the FS expenditures totaled over \$41 million, for DOI \$74.7 million. Most emergency treatments were completed before winter, and included the following examples: grass seeding, mulching, intensive log and wattle erosion barriers, and drainage improvements on roads and trails.

- Rehabilitation and Restoration: Initiated long-term (2-3 year) projects that included reforestation; replacement or repair of minor facilities; treatment of invasive species; survey and monitor impacts to wilderness; survey and rehabilitate impacted heritage resources; reconstruct fencing; and restore impacted trails.
- Research in rehabilitation included, for example, quantifying the soil and water quality consequences of catastrophic fire.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction

- Planned and funded fuel reduction projects treating 3.2 million acres (FS - 1.8 million, DOI - 1.4 million) of Federal land and protecting and providing hazard mitigation on 395,000 acres of private lands. The wildland urban interface (WUI) is a high priority with over 818,000 (FS-509,000 and DOI-309,000) acres planned for treatment. As the year proceeds and costs further refined - especially in the WUI - the amount of treatment acres may be revised.
- FS undertook 136 forest health projects, about one-third of which are long-term, and provided \$600,000 to DOI for forest health projects. These activities included treatment of invasive insects, diseases, and plant species. Treatment activities included suppression and prevention activities such as survey, biocontrol, pruning, thinning, and chemical use.
- Planned and implemented insect and disease suppression activities on (FS) 790,000 acres to control and slow the spread of these species.
- Research contributed to a better understanding of fuel load location and accumulation rates. This information is crucial to reducing short and long-term fuel build up areas, and for prioritizing areas for fuel load reduction management.

Rural and Community Assistance

- Through the FS Volunteer Fire Assistance and the DOI Rural Fire Assistance programs provided funds for training and equipment to 5,000 (FS-4,140 and DOI-830) volunteer fire departments in high-risk areas.
- FS Economic Action Programs expanded community planning and strategic actions for community protection such as FIREWISE concepts, developed biomass utilization plans, and provided for the demonstration of fuels reduction practices, equipment and technologies to convert forest fuels to alternative energy and value added products.
- Assisted State and local partners by providing funding assistance to rural and volunteer fire departments and educating homeowners to take actions to reduce fire risk to homes and private property through programs such as FIREWISE, as well as fuels reduction, defensible space development, and community hazard mitigation on nonfederal lands.

- Seven FIREWISE Community Workshops have hosted 570 participants from 280 communities in 39 states. Four more workshops are scheduled for FY01.
- Tested the effectiveness of different models of collaboration, education, and community actions and compare different local regulatory and incentive-based policies for encouraging residents to adopt FIREWISE practices. These research efforts will provide useful insights and guidelines for implementing effective community-level programs for wildfire protection.

Research and Development

- Increased the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP). This applied research and development assesses: fire behavior and fire restoration techniques during and immediately after fire events; aircraft-based tools for monitoring fire behavior; understanding about post-fire conditions, fire effects, and the effectiveness of past land management treatments; and establishes protocols for evaluating rehabilitation measures. Established a Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

FY 2002 Plans

Firefighting

- Continue to implement the workforce development strategy, hire and train personnel, and acquire needed equipment to maintain adequate level of firefighting effectiveness.
- Ensure adequate funding to cover expected annual suppression costs.

Rehabilitation and Restoration

- Continue to emphasize rehabilitation on the highest priority areas identified within the burned areas from the year 2000 fires.
- Rehabilitation activities to include reforestation, Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species habitat restoration, invasive plant treatment and insect and disease suppression. FS emphasis will be on reforestation activities in Regions 1 and 4 (Montana and Idaho) begun in FY 2001.
- DOI will ensure native seed supply for rehabilitation and fuels treatment projects through contracting efforts to stimulate development of private warehousing facilities.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction

- The Departments will continue to focus on planning and accomplishing hazardous fuels projects in the wildland urban interface (WUI). Projects will be developed as much as

possible in cooperation and collaboration with a range of partners, such as, the States and local communities.

- The Departments will increase project emphasis and concentration in the wildland urban interface (WUI). Within this the focus will be on areas that will achieve the greatest benefit, that is, community protection and ecological restoration. Costs per acre in these areas could be higher than in FY 2001. The FS plans to accomplish a total of 1.8 million acres, 500,000 of which will be in the WUI. The DOI plans to accomplish a total of 1.4 million acres, 300,000 of which will be in the WUI.

Forest Health Management

- Conduct suppression eradication projects and provide technical assistance to maintain and enhance the protection, prevention and health of forests in the U.S. on Federal and non-federal lands.
- Respond to threats to forest ecosystems from non-native invasive species. Emphasis on protecting critical ecosystems from established infestations of non-native insects, diseases, and plants.
- Provide State and private landowners with technical assistance in preventing pest outbreaks and maintaining healthy forests, coordinate actions where pest outbreaks or other forest health problems overlap ownership boundaries.

Rural and Community Assistance

- USDA Forest Service Cooperative Fire and DOI's Rural Fire Assistance will continue to fund state and volunteer/rural fire departments across the nation at near the same levels as FY01.
- The Departments will conduct six FIREWISE workshops across the US.
- FS EAP will have two levels of program assistance. The first will constitute 75% of program assistance and focus on local community projects that create and retain local jobs through forest restoration and utilization of hazardous fuels. The second will include regional and national level projects. These projects support multiple communities and/or watersheds around alternative fuels projects developed in partnership with Federal, Tribal Nations, and State agencies. This scale of projects can better take advantage of federal and state research by transferring and applying good science to local projects.

**Summary of Funding for the National Fire Plan
Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, FY 2001-2002**

(Dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY 2000 ^{a/}	FY 2001		FY 2002	FY 2002
		(w/ rescission)	(+) ; (-)	Budget Request	(+) ; (-)
	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2002
Department of the Interior					
Preparedness ^{b/}	175,850	314,712	138,862	280,807	-33,905
Fire Operations	115,107	452,849	337,742	367,614	-85,235
Suppression	46,279	153,109	106,830	161,424	8,315
Hazardous Fuel Reduction	48,828	194,970	146,142	186,190	-8,780
Restoration and Rehabilitation ^{c/}	20,000	104,769	84,769	20,000	-84,769
Rural Fire Assistance	0	9,978	9,978	10,000	22
Emergency Fire Contingency	200,000	199,560	-440	0	-199,560
Subtotal, USDI	490,957	977,099	486,142	658,421	-318,678
Department of Agriculture					
Preparedness	408,768	611,143	202,375	622,618	11,475
Fire Operations	209,188	844,053 ^{e/}	634,865	657,731	-186,322
Suppression	139,188	319,325	180,137	325,321 ^{d/}	5,996
Hazardous Fuel Reduction	70,000	205,158	135,158	209,010	3,852
Restoration and Rehabilitation	0	141,688	141,688	3,668	-138,020
Fire Facilities	0	43,903	43,903	20,376	-23,527
Research and Development	0	15,965	15,965	16,265	300
Forest Health Management	0	11,974	11,974	11,974	0
Economic Action Program	0	12,472	12,472	12,472	0
Community and Private Land Fire Assistance	0	34,923	34,923	0	-34,923
State Fire Assistance	23,929	75,328 ^{f/}	51,399	75,693 ^{f/}	365
Volunteer Fire Assistance	3,240	13,251 ^{f/}	10,011	13,315 ^{f/}	64
Emergency Fire Contingency	390,000	425,063	35,063	0	-425,063
Subtotal, USDA Forest Service	1,035,125	1,910,193	993,081	1,310,712	-634,403
USDA/DOI					
Preparedness	584,618	925,855	341,237	903,425	-22,430
Fire Operations	324,295	1,296,902	972,607	1,025,345	-271,557
Suppression	185,467	472,434	286,967	486,745	14,311
Hazardous Fuel Reduction	118,828	400,128	281,300	395,200	-4,928
Restoration and Rehabilitation	0	246,457	219,927	23,668	-222,789
Forest Health Management	0	11,974	11,974	11,974	0
Economic Action Program	0	12,472	12,472	12,472	0
Community and Private Land Fire Assistance	0	34,923	34,923	0	-34,923
Fire Facilities	0	43,903	43,903	20,376	-23,527
Research and Development	0	15,965	15,965	16,265	300
State Fire Assistance	23,929	75,328 ^{f/}	51,399	75,328 ^{f/}	365
Rural and Volunteer Fire Assistance	3,240	23,299 ^{f/}	20,059	23,315 ^{f/}	86
Emergency Fire Contingency	590,000	624,623	34,623	0	-624,623
TOTAL, USDI and USDA Forest Service	1,526,082	2,887,292	1,479,223	1,969,133	-953,081

^{a/} FY 2000 funding displayed for comparison purposes, as the NFP was initiated in FY 2001.

^{b/} Includes DOI funding for Fire Facilities and Joint Fire Sciences.

^{c/} Includes DOI Burned Area Rehabilitation funding.

^{d/} Includes Forest Service funding for Joint Fire Sciences and Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER).

^{e/} In FY 2001 Wildland Fire Operations reflects \$726,039,000 of Wildland Fire Appropriations and \$118,014,000 of S&PF funds (Total = \$844,053,000).

^{f/} FY 2001 and FY02 -- FS Wildland Fire Management - Fire Operations totals displayed in this table include State Fire Assistance (\$50,383,000) and Volunteer Fire Assistance (\$8,262,000). The balance of these funds (\$24,945,000 and \$4,989,000, respectively) remain in the State and Private Forestry, State Fire and Volunteer Fire EBLIs.